

Michael F. Easley
Governor



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Contact: Renee Hoffman
Phone: 919/733-5612

GOV. EASLEY SAYS WESTERN N.C. HAS MADE MAJOR RECOVERY FROM '04 STORMS ***\$300 Million Keep Repairs from Tropical Storms Frances and Ivan Moving Forward***

RALEIGH - Gov. Mike Easley said today that hundreds of roads and bridges have been repaired, homes rebuilt and even a county department of health building replaced as western North Carolina's recovery from the devastation left by the 2004 hurricane season approaches completion. Along with the repairs, the work will make the region less susceptible to future disasters. The western part of the state suffered some of the worst flooding in its history after Hurricanes Frances and Ivan moved inland over the mountains in September 2004.

"I am pleased and encouraged by the progress being made as the mountain region reclaims its luster with tourists coming in droves to see this fall's colors," said Easley. "Communities have pulled together; neighbors have been helping neighbors as they do more than just put things back the way they were before the floods. We are making improvements that will protect the region against future storms and lessen the number of people in harm's way."

In September 2004, rains from back-to-back hurricanes Frances and Ivan flooded several mountain towns including Canton, Clyde, Newland and Biltmore Village. Homes were swept away in a landslide on Peak's Creek in Macon County and emergency assistance crews had to rescue scores of people from rising flood waters across the region. At least eight people were killed in the storms.

Easley declared a state of emergency and federal disaster assistance was granted. More than \$300 million in state and federal funds have paid for clearing debris, restoring infrastructure and repairing hundreds of homes and businesses. Included in that amount is \$247 million in state funds appropriated by the General Assembly to provide assistance where the federal programs fell short.

"The recovery also includes rebuilding efforts designed to prevent similar losses when other disasters strike," Easley said. "By moving people out of danger areas, we keep them from suffering future damage and reduce recovery costs from future storms."

A third of the aid is being spent on razing damaged buildings, elevating homes and businesses in flood-prone areas and floodplain mapping. Efforts are also underway to purchase flood-prone properties in Buncombe, Haywood, Avery, and Caldwell counties, and in the towns of Spruce Pine and Canton.

A total of 874 public roads, bridges and building repair projects have been completed with \$51.6 million in state and federal aid. Nearly 25,700 individuals and families received about \$34.7 million in state and federal assistance to cope with storm-related expenses.

Governor's Press Office
State Capitol, Raleigh, NC 27603-8001
(919) 733-5612 - Toll Free 1-800-662-7005
FAX (919) 733-5166